

Thoughts are born of places - Augusto Corrieri

Berlin Festpiele, 'Palast der Republik' 7-8 March 2019

1. AT MOTEL ONE

am sitting in the café on the 10th floor of the Upper West skyscraper in Charlottensburg, a building otherwise known as Motel One, which is where I am staying in for the week.

It is a curved structure, soaring quite impressively into the Berlin sky when viewed from street level, and one of the tallest in the city, at 119 metres. Still, this is small compared to the kinds of buildings clamouring for attention on the so-called global stage: currently, first prize goes to Dubai's Tower - known as Burj Khalifa - which reaches 829metres. The spire alone, the tip of the building, is 244metres tall, twice the size of the Motel One building I am staying in.



The hotel is designed on the theme of films and cinema. There are large old projectors, books on Stanley Kubrik are scattered around the place, a projection screen showing generic clips of various movies without sound, and director-style foldable chairs featuring the names of A-list Hollywood actors, Tom Cruise, etc. On the horizon towards the east is the famous TV tower. I am reminded of the so-called establishing shot of films, the Eiffel tower, the Empire State Building, the leaning tower of Pisa, etc. shots whose sole purpose is to quickly indicate to the viewers where they are being transported. This is Berlin.

It is Thursday 7th March. I have been in Berlin 3 days: the plan, if I can call it that, was to have 2 days to walk around, and 2 days to write. 4 days in total in which to find the Palast der Republik, or to perhaps dwell in the impossibilities of finding it, and see what might emerge, if anything. Just as one might play with possibilities, this is about playing with impossibilities. Things that cannot happen, places that cannot

be retrieved. A narrative of ambivalence and uncertainty, to counter the definitive, the certain narrative that is being shaped by the arrival of the 'new' Prussian Palace, the Schloss, which is currently re-occupying the site of the former GDR Palast.

The working method, in as much as it could be described as a method, is to try and think with place, to be in situ, and to allow whatever might happen, including small perceptual phenomena, to be potentially significant, and to have a seat of honour in the project. This approach I think echoes something mentioned by Adorno in *Minima Moralia*, a copy of which I brought with me to Berlin. He proposes to track seemingly small or insignificant materials. He suggests, in the English translation, 'to bring the intentionless within the realm of concepts.' The aim, he writes, is 'to make fruitful what has not yet been foreclosed by great intentions.'

So, I don't know if this 4-day project will work, or fail, or work by failing, or fail by working. But already there are invitations to trace strange echoes and connections.

Beginning with skyscrapers and soaring heights, particularly the Dubai tower, a tower made of steel which derived from

none other than the demolished Palast der Republik. During demolition of the Palast, its steel girders were loaded onto barges on the river Spree, and moved over 3 days to a different site to be melted down and sold off. In an online article the owner of the scrap metal company responsible for the Palast's demolition is quoted as saying "The quality of the steel is excellent... We have no difficulty finding markets for it."¹



Curiously, the Dubai tower's spire, made up more than 4,000 tonnes of steel, is mostly decorative, serving merely to extend the height of the building. The very top of the spire made celebrity news in 2010, when film star Tom Cruise, who was there to shoot Mission Impossible 4, was photographed sitting on top. Up there he

¹ <https://www.dw.com/en/berlins-demolished-socialist-palace-is-revived-in-dubai/a-3554502>

apparently drew a heart and wrote the name of his wife, Katie Holmes, into the steel structure. Tom and Katie divorced 2 years later.

What matters here, perhaps, is the shift from the horizontal to the vertical... From the horizontal steel structure of the Palast to the dizzying verticality of Dubai, as though

ideologies could be made and unmade, thought and rethought, by simply re-arranging material into different shapes: perhaps, perhaps, a rather flat arrangement for social democracies, then vertical lines shooting up into the skies for global neo-liberal



economies. Or if you like, the vertiginous heights of capital have been made possible by a socialist material infrastructure, the inverse of what Marx predicted, that socialism would grow out of a capitalist economy. The 'same' steel used for almost diametrically opposite utopias. Where will that steel head to next I wonder: in 50, 100 years from now, what political ideology will mould and alter the steel from Dubai tower, from the Palast?

The Palast is now a kind of dispersed matter, its steel and other materials transforming into something else, moved to other sites, put to different uses. A material dissemination, like a controlled explosion, parts flying in different directions, moved to different places, intentionally or not. I know that some of the Palast's steel was also sold to Volkswagen, who use it to make engines for their cars. So some of the GDR building's steel has evaporated into the abstract heights of capital, whilst some has stayed on the ground, to power motion, progress, work, and people.

The Palast as alchemy, the transmutation of matter. An alchemy profoundly entwined with larger social and economic and historical processes.

I am a tourist amidst some of these processes, just as I am a tourist in the city, but I have been lucky to have at least 2 guides. The first guide being a book on the reunification of Germany by social theorist Ben Gook - *Divided Subjects, Invisible Borders* - and the second guide being Joshua Wicke, a co-curator of this weekend, directing me ahead of my arrival in Berlin to some of the material remnants.

I hear a loud rumble from outside. I look out of the window of the Motel One, and down at the street but see nothing that might explain the sound. It's only when 2 people walk past, their clothes and umbrellas flapping and agitated, that I realise a powerful wind has started blowing outside.

This is as much as I can do for a few days: to look and see, to go by what I see. I think of that famous Oscar Wilde quote, used by critic Susan Sontag at the start of her essay *Against Interpretation*: 'It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible.'

2. THE SITE

On Monday I make my first trip to the site. I know in advance that the Palast is nowhere to be found, but nevertheless I'm curious as to what *is* there that might enable to think or conjure the Palast. Echoes and false coincidences, intimations, vestiges, traces of whatever kind. It is a strange kind of detective work, because all clues are equally valid. For instance, as I board the metro at Zoologische Garten, the word Palast comes into view clearly across the street, in large white letters, as the insignia of the 1950's cinema Zoo Palast. This, I think to myself, is probably not so relevant, but I take a photograph anyway. In any case, it explains why the Motel One is themed after films and cinema.



After a 20minute journey on the U2, as the train pulls in to Hausvogteiplatz, I spot a copy of an old drawing of Schlossplatz attached to the metro wall, the original Prussian Schloss building casting a shadow over the left half of the square.

I emerge onto street level to go and find the new-old Schloss, which occupies the site of the former Palast der Republik. For some strange reason I forget I have a phone with



me to direct me. Although I know I am not far from the site, I do not know where to head exactly, but I am quite happy to wander, without a map, in some of the nearby parts of the city. I am in no rush to get to the site: after all, if parts of the Palast can make it all the way to Dubai, then it surely makes sense to look around the neighbourhood, and not just directly at the site itself. The Palast is where it is not.

I come across a long sequence of GDR tower blocks, a CocaCola sign placed elegantly on top one of the roofs, as though winking, in reference to the film *Goodbye Lenin*, where a large CocaCola canvas is hung across a building. On one side of the road there are works going on to repave the pavement, perhaps to give the area a more pleasant look should any tourists from the nearby Museum Island mistakenly end up in this more Eastern-looking part of the city centre. I am always quietly amazed, whenever I leave the UK, at how much the building works in countries such as Germany are often completely visible and even accessible to anyone. In the UK any work like this is completely covered from view, and utterly secured. Here, however, we can see what's happening, and we can easily enter the site.

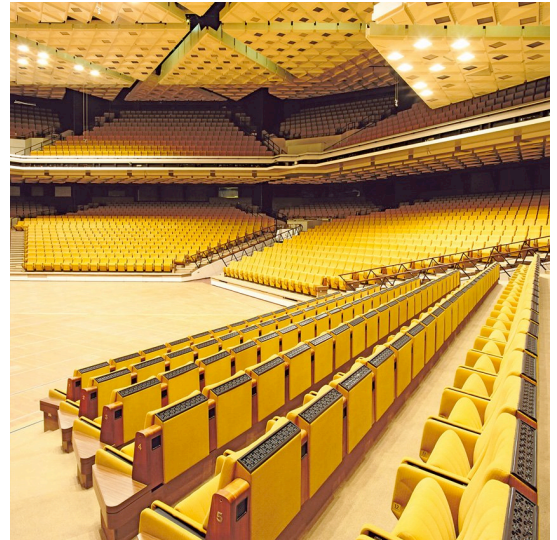
Walking further, I see that one of the low lying concrete buildings features a number of distinctive reflective orange glass panels, which were indeed a feature of the Palast. The placement of a limited number of these tinted windows, amidst regular ones, does suggest that these have come from a different building altogether.



Then, as I keep my camera attached to my face, I see, for a second or two, that I am now looking straight at my hotel, Motel One, but how could this be? How could my half hour trip on the U2 simply have returned me to my original departure point? Of course, I quickly realise Motel One must be a chain, and I have simply stumbled upon another Motel One. I mentally rename this Motel One as Motel Two, to avoid confusion. All this, I think to myself, is probably not so relevant, but I take a photograph anyway.

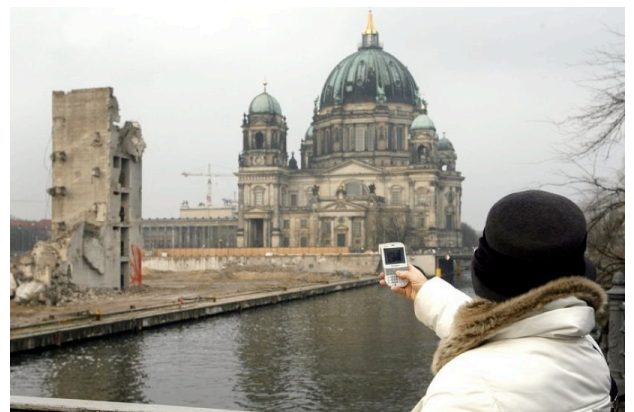


At this stage, day 1, I know a handful of facts about the Palast der Republik. I know that it was constructed as a central icon of the GDR, celebrating the union of state and people by being both the seat of the parliament as well as a cultural and entertainment hub: a theatre, a large auditorium, a disco, a bowling alley, art gallery, restaurant and café. Because the original Schloss was badly damaged by the allied bombs in 1945, in 1950 the GDR demolished the castle and



cleared the area. The Palast was erected and opened in 1973. It functioned for about 13 years. The fall of the wall and the dissolution of the parliament quickly precipitated a desire to remove this symbolic structure. It seems that the perfect excuse was found by discovering asbestos in the building. The Palast was emptied, symbols taken down, though the structure itself remained in place up until its demolition in 2006-2008.

Its time was brief: in harsh percentage terms, considering that the site housed a castle since the 15th century, the 13 functioning years of the Palast only make up 2,28% of total use of the site. The remaining time the site was occupied by the Schloss, in its various incarnations and modifications.



What is mostly at stake is the symbolic or perhaps its metonymic function. The Palast doesn't just symbolise, but fundamentally is, or comes to be, the GDR, its history, and the way that history is reflected upon. To think of alterations to the Palast is automatically to think of alterations to history. It is like a strange game of chess, any small physical movement can take on huge significance. It is perhaps a phenomenon unique to Berlin that architectural changes are heavily charged: even fairly functional physical alterations to the built environment take on the same ritualistic value of, say, grand gestures such as laying a wreath, or lowering a flag, or declaring a new era, etc. It's clear that history doesn't just happen on the so-called historical dates, but perhaps even more so in the everyday: in the apparently trivial phenomena, the seemingly quiet time of rest, years

or decades away from the big historical events, Rest is far from restful; when nothing is happening, a lot is happening. Not even under the surface, but in the full light of day, for everyone to see.

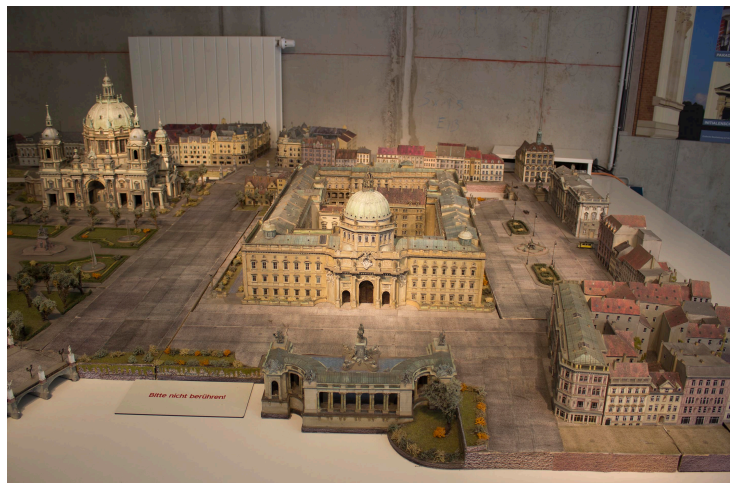
I keep walking, orienting myself to where I think I “should” be going, if I am to reach the site. I am, as the expression goes, following my nose. I wonder whether I should ask someone for directions, which seems like an increasingly rare thing to do. I think to myself I could, as a game, ask people the whereabouts of the Palast der Republik, merely to see how they would respond. I decide against this idea, partly out of timidity, and partly as I don’t want to muck around with what seems to me as a fragile but important social bond: to ask for directions is also to ask a stranger for help, so right now, on day 1, it seems to me it would be irresponsible to approach people in this way.

As the architecture around me begins to take on a more palatial or classicist turn, I know I must be heading towards the Schloss, but before I even reach it, on the other side of the street I spot a Schloss information shop. I step inside.

3. The Schloss Shop

The standout item inside the shop and information centre is a handmade elaborate reproduction of the area known as Museum Island, hugged as it is by the Spree, featuring different national museums, the Schloss now in prime position.

There are two other tourists inside, and a man, I would say in his 70s. He is gesturing towards the model. I do not speak or understand enough German



enough to know what he is saying, but I assume he is explaining to the two other tourists some of the features of the new Palace, or perhaps of the small model, or perhaps of both.

Just in front of the model, in stark contrast to it, is an A4 printed sheet, held down with scotch tape, announcing simply and crudely: *Berlin in 1900*. If this was a shop for pensioners with a passion for constructing models of their imaginary bygone cities, I guess that none of this would be of much concern. In any case, I wouldn't be here visiting it. But this is not a toyshop for adults with conservative views of the past, but a potent site where the future is being written, and the future looks like a museum gift shop. They even sell postcards of computer generated images of people inside the building's courtyard, the completed Schloss casting a shadow over the left half of the square. What is one meant to write on the back of such a postcard: wish you were here? Wish I was here? Wish we are all here? As far as selling a fantasy goes, this is as literal as it can possibly get.



Given the circumstances, I don't mind breaking my own promise and timidity, and flatly asking the guide: where is the Palast der Replublick? He briskly takes out a red LED pointer, and aims it squarely at the model, hitting the classicist dome structure of the Schloss. In this case, the simple gesture of pointing, of showing a stranger the way, of saying 'over there', bears an almost unbearable weight: this surgically precise erasure of history, this 'confiscation of memory', is what Ben Gook describes in his study as 'the rush to close off ambivalent or ambiguous historical meaning'. In a complex situation of differing accounts, and contradictory thoughts and feelings over the GDR - conflicts that run not just between individuals, but within single individuals themselves, let's say - in this affective context, an A4 sheet is printed and stuck on a table, and a man points to a model and miscalls it. As seemingly innocent as this gesture might appear, what it suggests, what it rests on, is a pernicious strategy of tabula rasa, clearing the decks of the wholly negative 20th century, in order to return to the certainties of perceived grandeur.

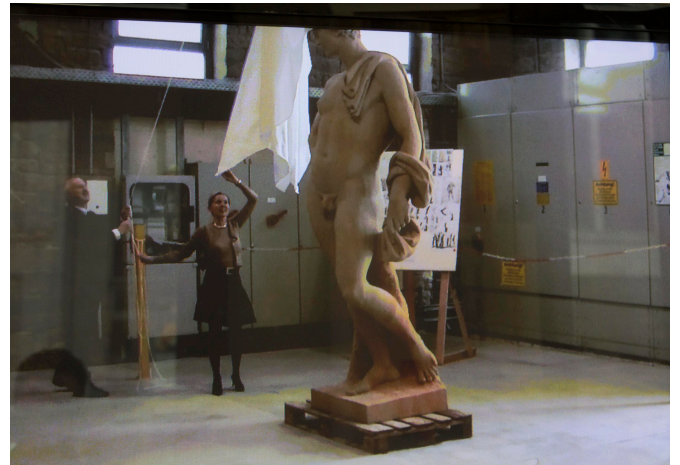
Again, to quote Gook:

Definitive certainty regarding the present comes to look like a cover story, a symptomal self-cure for the foundational ambivalence we all feel and a repression of contradictory thoughts and feelings. (p.130)

I move away from the model, and spend a while in the shop, taking pictures of pictures, of postcards, of televised imagery, of statues, of plaster casts. I am wholly protected in this activity, because I just look like an over-enthusiastic tourist, which is in any case probably true.

The video footage displayed on one of several large monitor screens focuses on the labour of recreating or restoring statues and Baroque ornamentation. Whether the sculptural elements are being made anew,

as in this still, or whether they are originals, what matters here is the role performed by these objects, or the narratives they authorise: the narrative of *return*. What was lost is now here, or almost here. The days of empire and conquest and pride and civility are coming back. As I later read in their publicity



material: 'Present-day sculptors use the same methods as their colleagues did 300 years ago.' (p.70)

As many people right now, I feel especially sensitised to this kind of abrasive narrative of a return, as the UK goes through the horror of Brexit, much of which is predicated on a glorious, sharp, unequivocal return to a black and white past. Britain in 1900.

Scattered around the table surfaces inside the shop are copies of a colourful magazine dedicated entirely to the project of returning the Prussian Palace. This is the October 2018 issue, and it's number 90.

I am a little speechless when flicking through the free magazine: the images speak so eloquently, with little need for interpretation or critical analysis, they openly announce the political intentions of the project, and the dynamics behind it.

So for instance on one page there is a photograph of a group of 'friends of the Schloss' waving happily from aboard an early 20th century large which features the

words 'Nostalgia Citytour' emblazoned on the side. Everything is white: the wagon, the people, their hair, even some of the clothes.

Or else a view of the site in 1993, proudly displaying the so-called Schloss-simulation, a scaffolding structure covered by a canvas drawing of the Prussian Schloss, positioned directly in front of the Palast and blocking it from view. The Palast is in the margin, rendered non-existent, by an imposing Schloss simulation. This is the moment, oh so quiet, when one imago covers another. Once again, it would seem there is little left to deconstruct or analyse here. The GDR building is literally covered by the image or simulation of the Prussian Palast. I can't imagine what a media theorist like Baudrillard might have said about a situation like this, which so perfectly mirrors his analysis of simulacra as to render his theory almost redundant. What is surprising is the violence of the gesture, how little impunity it seems to carry.

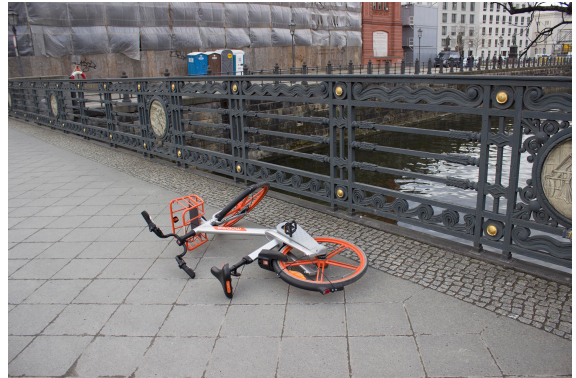
To mould the present in the perfect image of the past, as though a city a people could, without damage or suffering, be pressed into a readymade shape.

I do some more shop browsing, I buy a small book on the construction of the Schloss. When I go to pay, a different employee greets me in English. I ask if the building is open, and he explains that it is still being completed, and is due to be finished next year. When I ask if the building feature original parts, he tells me that only about 5% of it will contain originals, and in any case these will be protected and indoors. He



explains that in 1950 when the original building was demolished by the GDR - for ideological reasons, he says - only a few statues were salvaged.

I thank him, and walk outside. I take a deep breath and begin walking towards the site, but I've hardly taken a step when I trip and almost fall on one of the orange bicycles for hire.



3. CAFÉ

I go to a nearby café, to take shelter, though I am not sure from what, since it is not raining or snowing. Some other strange weather, I guess. A turbulence that comes when histories are dissolved.

I ask for a double espresso, 'yes take a seat', and I do.

The walls feature large photographs, printed on thick painters' canvases, of various men. There's a large print of Chomsky, followed by Julian Assange, Malcolm X, Roman Polansky, and various Hollywood actors. What on earth is going on here? What logic could possibly bring these faces together?

The Malmcolm X canvas especially catches my eyes, since it is partly covered up by a large fridge, and because of the quote on it:

'There is no better than adversity. Every defeat, every heartbreak, every loss, contains its own seed, its own lesson on how to improve your performance the next time.'

In the context of the wall it has been placed on, the quote reads more like a business manual on improving productivity and performance. There is something about seeing Malcom X's words transformed into generic motivational speech that brings to mind another passage by Adorno:



‘The private lives of countless people are becoming those of agents... the entire private domain is being engulfed by a mysterious activity that bears all the features of commercial life without there being actually any business to transact.’

The practical orders of life, in a capitalist economy, stunt us, ‘they sever everything that is tender. For tenderness between people is nothing other than awareness of the possibility of relations without purpose.’ (p.41)

Perhaps Adorno is my 3rd guide in this trip.

I pay for my coffee and head back out.

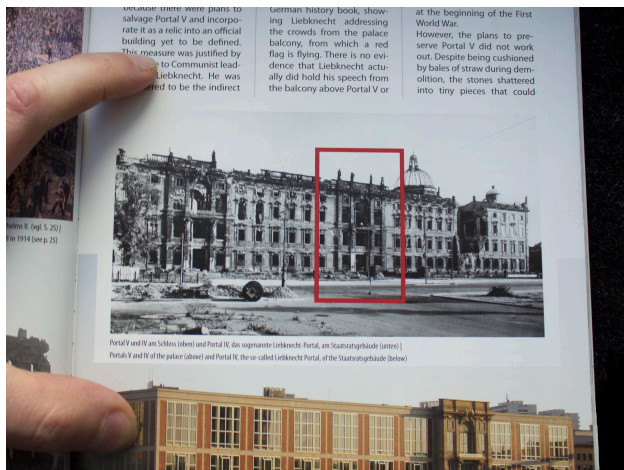
4. THE SITE

I somehow want to avoid seeing the Schloss itself. I keep my back to it, I take pictures of what’s around it. So, without realising this at the time, I photograph the State Council Building, a GDR construction which in fact incorporates one of the original or entrances of the authentic Schloss. This construction is heavily criticised by the Schloss publicity material, of course, since it constitutes a threat: in a way, this GDR building is more authentically the Schloss than the replica that is currently being finalised. This



is Schloss 1, whereas the new Schloss is Schloss 2. In order to make Schloss 2 into Schloss 1, the original remains have to be discursively demolished.

(Curiously enough, in the book I purchased from the information shop, the original portal is marked by the same red rectangle that is used by the Festpiele. The red frame coming to be used across very different institutions, perhaps for opposite reasons. It features in much of the book. It suggests, if nothing else, a strong visual relation between the event this weekend and the current political reorganisation of the city centre.)



Freundeskreis Halberstadt

Der Freundeskreis Halberstadt
im Förderverein Berliner Schloss e. V.
Postfach 56 02 20
22551 Hamburg-Rissen
Tel. 040 / 89 80 75-0

Spendenkonto bei der
Deutschen Bank Berlin
IBAN: DE34 100700000077227729
BIC: DEUTDEBBXXX

Der Freundeskreis Halberstadt
sammelt auf seinem eigenen
Unter-Konto allein für das „Halber-
städter Fenster“ im Erdgeschoss des
Lustgartenrisalits Eosanders.

Freundeskreis Halberstadt
Dr. Bernd Kramer
Telefon 039427 / 99799
Berndthilokramer@gmx.de

Freundeskreis Lüneburg

Der Freundeskreis Lüneburg
im Förderverein Berliner Schloss e. V.
Postfach 56 02 20
22551 Hamburg-Rissen
Tel. 040 / 89 80 75-0

Spendenkonto bei der
Deutschen Bank Berlin
IBAN: DE73 100700000077227706
BIC: DEUTDEBBXXX

Der Freundeskreis Lüneburg sammelt
auf seinem eigenen Unter-Konto allein
für das „Lüneburger Mezzanin Fenster“
in der Schlüterfassade.

Freundeskreis Lüneburg
Gerhard Marwitz
Oberstudienrat a. D.
Telefon: 04131-46 1 42

Freundeskreis München

I continue to walk around the current site, not quite wanting to engage with it, though I'm aware that turning my back in this way is probably only reinforcing its hold over me.

I reach the Eastern side of the building, which is where the building's future use is clearly announced: the Humboldt Forum, a place of 'cultural understanding', housing artefacts of cultures from around the world, in a kind of parallel to the British museum.



This more modern style is again at the service of a monolithic, definitive account of history: on one side, Prussian glory, and here, as an addition to the past, the present. Clear cut lines between then and now. I can imagine that future visitors to museum island will come across the building and think that, through the sharp juxtaposition of styles, the modern side was a recent addition to the original historic palace, thereby adding architectural authenticity to the building as a whole.

I walk along the modern façade, along the spree, until I find two statues of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, positioned to be facing the Schloss. Marx is sitting down, as if all this is too much for him to bear. I would later find out, through talking to Maximilian Haas, that it is likely the statues once faced the opposite direction, towards the GDR's television tower. When did they turn to face the Schloss, and what can be read in this simple reorientation, these turns and returns of stone matter?

I continue walking around the Schloss, and find an altogether different statue of Prussian architect Schinkel, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, who designed the Schloss's prominent dome. He is not sitting, he's standing on a pedestal, looking directly across at the building. Viewed from the above, Karl Marx and Karl Schinkel are now facing each other, in silent contemplation.

I begin to make my way back. I have, of course, not found the Palast der Republik so far. On my way to the metro station I come across an empty shop, the sign Sale Sale in red letters on one side: lying on the floor inside are wrapped items, cheap looking

remnants. Who, I wonder will claim these? Probably not so relevant, but I take a photograph anyway.



5. Last visit

On the second day I return to the site, this time walking slowly by the neo-classical buildings and museums. I walk under a Roman-style portico, roof covered with tall columns. It's a wholly different city, 5 mins away from the Eastern tower blocks: visitors are everywhere, taking pictures, orienting themselves. A group of Italian tourists just next to me are discussing their plans: should we eat now and then explore the area, or should we first to explore the area, then eat. On one of the bridges over the Spree I see a street entertainer dressed as Spiderman, his act consists entirely of making bubbles: he dips two large sticks into a bucket of liquid solution, then holds the sticks up to the wind to release a flow of bubbles which float all around the area.

The weather suddenly changes: it starts to rain heavily, no, actually, it's hail, small pellets of ice start pouring down on museum island. Everyone takes shelter under the Roman portico. Spiderman quickly packs his tools and runs for cover, as the Italian tourists cheer him on. He cries out: 'Spiderman saves the world' and everyone chuckles.

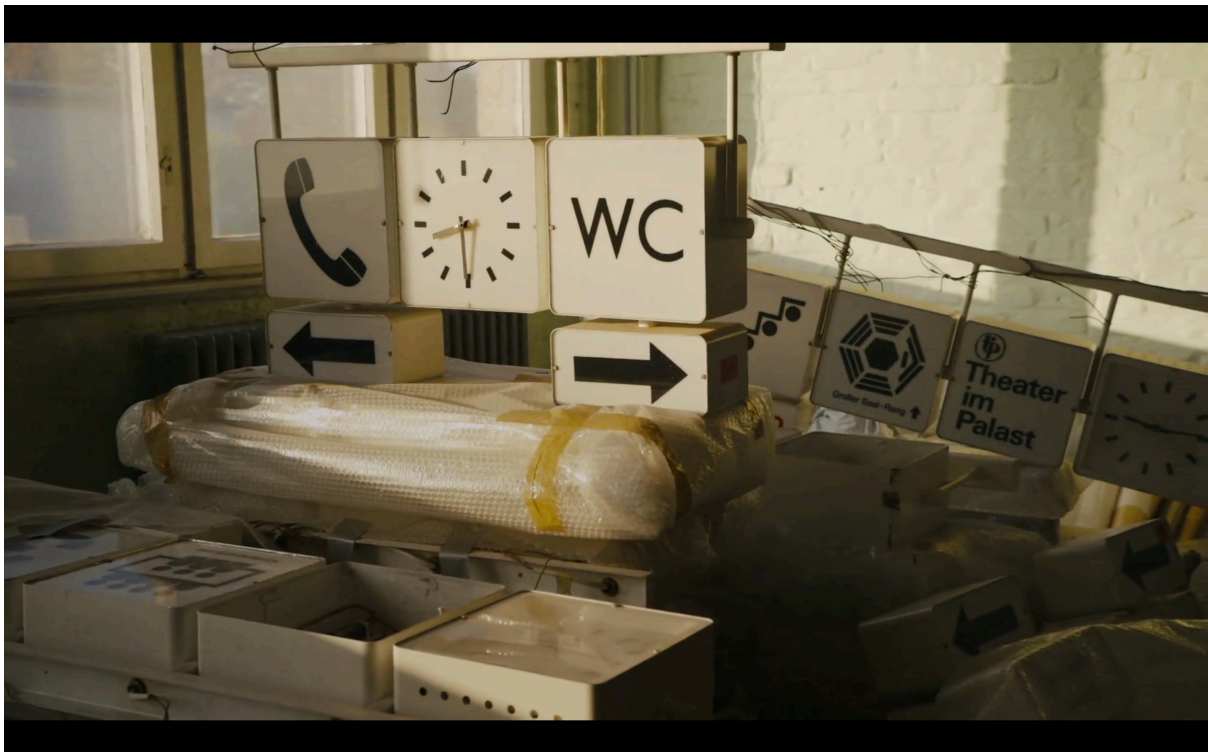
I move to a nearby café, and read through the Schloss publication.

It is apparent to me by this point that neither the Palast nor the Schloss are here: in fact, the Schloss rubble was collected and carted to Volkpark Friedrichshain, where it formed a rubble



heap. This was then covered with top soil and grass. Today it just appears as a natural feature of the park.

As for the Palast, other than its steel, I know windows have indeed been used in other architectural or art works. Chairs have found other uses in churches, tea cups and plates are for purchase on Ebay as quirky mementos of the GDR. Much also remains in storage, as can be seen in the film *Palace of the People*, by Bogdanov and Missirkov, screening later this evening. A caretaker of the Palast, who was reportedly the last person to lock up the building, is seen in the film walking around chairs, tables, a box containing flags of now vanished countries, clocks and signs indicating the way: to the theatre, to the toilets, to the stairs. What kind of 'material authority' is at stake here?



It seems pertinent, to me, that these objects should be kept, and remain somewhat unclaimed, without purpose. Not in a museum of the GDR, not on Ebay for sale, but kept nevertheless, for no clear purpose. At least they hold a promise of entropy, of slow degradation, of ambivalent values and meanings, which are precisely what is threatened by the current Schloss project.

I open the publicity book I bought from the information centre.

In a sense, I keep getting distracted by the Schloss, though this is perhaps in keeping with things as they stand. The discursive aesthetic imposition of the Schloss publicity material makes it hard to make space for anything other than combative

speech. That's of course fine, but how much sweeter, within this inferno, to find that which isn't inferno, and to give it space, and to make it last.

What the book's function is, truly, is to assault any potential criticism or differing position: the project is explicitly cast as a way of healing the city and returning its identity, after this was crudely vandalised by the GDR regime. The Palast is, tellingly, described as an 'impervious wall', a blockage in the desirable Prussian urban planning. It's clear that this Schloss *needs* this negative other, *needs* this fantasy of a wholly despotic communist order, to justify its own fantastical restorative operation. The assault against East Germans, Ossis, and the structuring of an idealised good German identity, are one and the same gesture.

If I insist on the publicity material it's because in some ways I take these images and writing to be, at this stage anyway, the primary way of legitimising or institutionalising an insidious idea: that is, *Das Schloss im Kopf*, to paraphrase the familiar Berlin saying *Die Mauer im Kopf*, The Wall in the Head. That is what is being built here, page after page. And it is through these editorial pictorial choices that, as Gook writes, a 'predominant mode of feeling, thinking and relating installs itself'.

I return to the metro walking the way I came on my first trip. I pass by once more the Motel one, or rather Motel 2. And as I look up, the words Palast der Republik clearly reach me from across the street.... I have found it, in the form of an electronic billboard sign, promoting this very event at the Berlin festpiele. The advert flicks between the Festpiele event, an advert for beer, and one for a TV series, with the strap line: *I know what you are thinking*.

What am I thinking? What's swimming in my mind?
Das Schloss im Kopf, that's what I am thinking.



CODA

One of the sites I wasn't able to visit during this 4-day project was Templehof, where I know that the granite slabs that make up the skate park come from the Palast der Republik. The images I find online provide some relief from the development of the Schloss,



Again, Adorno: 'Perhaps the true society will grow tired of development and, out of freedom, leave possibilities unused, instead of storming under a confused compulsion to the conquest of strange stars... *Rien faire comme une bête*, lying on water and looking peacefully at the sky, 'being, nothing else, without any further definition or fulfilment', might take the place of process, act, satisfaction... None of the abstract concepts come closer to fulfilled utopia than that of eternal peace.'

Right now skating in Templehof, or doing nothing and looking at the sky, seem rather desirable.

Just as I prepare to print these sheets and walk to the Festpiele from Motel One, a final proposition crystallises, as a way to embrace ambivalence and uncertainty: Berlin's nostalgia tourist buses should be taken to the Volkpark Friedrichshagen, for people to lie on the grassy hill and look up at the sky, then to Templehof, to watch the skaters or try a bit of skating oneself. The tour would then be followed by a facilitated group discussion on how nostalgia works in different ways, for different

epochs, and for different purposes. Everyone goes away maybe a bit confused, maybe a bit enlightened, but for sure no one's angry.

Perhaps a few years ago I would have taken for granted the privilege of occupying an ambivalent position, courting uncertainty and undecidability. Today, however, it seems ambivalence is seen as a wholly negative other, to be cured, purged, removed from the social body.

Which presents a strange kind of problem: how to stand up for ambivalence? How to assert uncertainty? How to fight for not having a purpose?